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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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CM 1041-81  
3 September 1981

JCS review completed.

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. L. PAUL BREMER, III, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE  
SECRETARY AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF  
STATE, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20520

Subject: US Arms Transfer Policy Toward Iran (U)

1. (S) This memorandum sets forth the rationale for the JCS opposition to all arms transfers to Iran.
2. (S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff oppose arms transfers to Iran for two primary reasons:
  - a. (S) Current US policy opposes all arms transfers to Iran. Any shift in that policy would be perceived by the moderate Arab states as an action directly counter to their interests. That perception would complicate efforts to enhance the US presence in the region.
  - b. (S) Improvement in the Iranian arms supply would intensify the war with Iraq. Improvements for the Iranian Air Force in particular would raise the possibility that the war could be carried into other regional states.
3. (S) The moderate Arab states of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates are committed to a policy opposing arms transfers to Iran. If the United States drops its opposition to the transfer of arms not of US origin to Iran by third countries, the moderate Arabs would interpret that action as directly counter to their interests. The impact would be especially serious if Israel increased its arms deliveries to Iran in the wake of a US policy change.
4. (S) The Arab perspective tends to automatically link Israeli actions and US policy. The Iraqi Government recently informed the Chief of the US Interest Section in Baghdad that Iraq considers the United States ultimately responsible for arms already transferred to Iran by Israel since, in Iraq's view, those transfers were possible only because US arms supplies to Israel are more than actually needed for Israel's defense. If Israeli deliveries of arms to Iran increase after a change in US policy, the Iraqi argument may find

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a sympathetic audience among moderate Arab states. This would add to the momentum of growing discontent with US-to-Israel arms policy, which surfaced within some moderate Arab states after the Israeli air attacks in Iraq and Lebanon. This, in turn, would jeopardize US efforts to secure facility access and host-nation support in Arab states vital to US Southwest Asia strategy.

5. (S) Implicit in the argument for arms transfers to Iran is the idea that Iran needs arms to resist further Iraqi incursions. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe, however, that the military capability of Iran is sufficient to meet the current Iraqi threat. Although Iraq initiated the war, still occupies Iranian territory, and maintains a numerical advantage in tanks, armored personnel carriers, and artillery, it has shown a reluctance over the past 9 months to pursue further offensive action. Most activity at the front is currently initiated by Iran. Iraqi field commanders are under strict orders to maintain position and counterattack only to this end. The morale of the Iraqi forces is low, and, while Saddam Hussein remains in firm control of the government, political dissidence within Iraq continues. Iraq has long called for negotiations to end the war and on several occasions has announced its willingness to accept a ceasefire.
6. (S) Given this politico-military climate, deliberate US action to encourage an increase in arms supply to Iran is unwarranted at this time. Rather than adding to the prospects for peace, increased supplies of arms may encourage Iran to intensify its military actions and continue to reject the negotiated-settlement option. As long as hostilities between Iran and Iraq continue, there is the potential that the fighting could involve other regional states vital to US interests. Iran has threatened military retaliation against any country aiding Iraq and some Iranian air attacks have already been made along the Iraq-Kuwait border.
7. (S) Based on the above rationale, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that the United States continue to oppose all arms transfers to Iran at this time.

FOR THE CHAIRMAN, JCS:



PAUL F. GORMAN  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Assistant to the Chairman, JCS

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